

Perfins on Columbians

The subject came up in 1973 and has reared its head several times since. Now here it is again.

Joe Laura, Jr. (#1238) asks, "What is the earliest known U.S. stamp to be perfined?"

Purists have argued that since perfins were not authorized until 1908, perfins on stamps issued before that are not "legitimate."

Others contend that earlier issues still on sale at post offices in 1908 would logically be perfined if they were purchased for use by a company with a perforator.

Laura has two perfins in his collection that clearly fall into the pre-perfin period. One is a 50c Columbian perforated with the H54 (H(CO)) pattern of the G. F. Harvey Company of Sarasota Springs, NY, and the other is a 3c 1894 issue (Scott 253) with pattern L129A (LOF/TIS) of the Loftis Jewelry Company of Chicago.

It seems logical that both stamps might be available, either at the post office or in the company mail room, a decade after they were issued—and thus legitimately perfined.

However, if we extend that logic, would a WAL/KER perfin on a 1953 commemorative be "legitimate" considering that the WAL/KER perforator wasn't made until 1977?

Most personal perfin collectors have a supply of old commemoratives they use for postage, so just how does one define legitimate perfin usage?